

ORDER OF BUSINESS

MRS. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order up at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mrs. ROUKEMA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of our colleagues and our people in the country to the outstanding anti-smoking program that the faculty at the Byrd Elementary School in Glen Rock, New Jersey, is providing for their students in cooperation with the New Jersey Breathes organization.

The highlight of the program was a school-wide assembly that I had the privilege of attending on Monday, March 22d, and during that assembly a 5th grade student, Katherine Sommer, was honored as the winner of a composition contest conducted as part of the anti-smoking effort.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read this winning essay so that my colleagues, their children and their grandchildren can benefit from the direct and lucid way that Katherine Sommer expressed her wisdom on the issue of smoking and young people. My reaction was, "out of the mouths of babes".

Here is her essay. It was entitled "Don't Smoke". Katherine Sommer began this way:

Things can happen. Some things can't be helped. Some things can. Some people die of old age, heart attacks, and many other things, but a lot of people die a long, horrible death. They die of smoking. It could happen to you if you make one bad decision. Think of it this way. If you choose to smoke, you will be doing something really stupid. You could get very sick or even die. That wouldn't be worth it, would it? The worst part is it would be all your own fault!

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleagues that Katherine Sommer was speaking to her classmates.

Some teenagers and young children start smoking for some really silly reasons. Some kids may want to join a popular group at school, and think smoking will make them look older. Some girls think smoking will make them look cool and boys will like them even more. What they do not know is if what happened on the inside of your body happened on the outside, you would look really ugly.

If you think that most kids smoke, you're wrong. The average kid doesn't smoke. And if you're anywhere near average, you won't either. You could really hurt yourself. You could get lung cancer, throat cancer, gum cancer or lip cancer. These are only some of the horrible diseases that you can get from smoking. And think, you could die just from trying to be cool.

Another reason you may start smoking is that a family member or really good friend may already smoke. You might think that it's harmless. You may think, I'll try one smoke, and if I don't like it I won't have any more. Well, it's not that easy. Smoking is

addictive. That means that once you start something, you can't stop. Once you try it, it could be too late.

I do not intend to smoke. You shouldn't either. Don't let anything interfere with your dreams. Just don't try smoking. It's not healthy.

That was Katherine Sommer, 5th grade, winning essay in Glen Rock, New Jersey. Again I want to say to my colleagues, out of the mouths of babes, a message for the ages.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LIPINSKI addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DIAZ-BALART addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BLUMENAUER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ENGLISH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SESSIONS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide this statement regarding the Government Pension Offset Reform legislation that I introduced today.

Pension offset reform is an important issue to me. It is an important issue for my constituents in Louisiana and it is an important issue for many State and

local government employees across the Nation.

As many of my colleagues are aware, State and local government employees were excluded from Social Security coverage when the Social Security system was first established in 1935. These employees were later given the option to enroll in the Social Security System, and in the 1960s and the 1970s many public employees opted to join in.

Some local governments chose to remain out of the system. Their employees and spouses planned for their retirement according to the rules in effect. It is estimated that about 4.9 million State and local government employees are not covered by Social Security. Seven States, California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Ohio and Texas, account for over 75 percent of the noncovered payroll.

Many of the State and local government employees that are covered by government pensions are or will be unfairly affected by the pension offset. As Members may be aware, the pension offset was originally enacted in response to the perceived abuses to the Social Security system resulting from the Goldfarb decision.

The Social Security system provides that if a spouse who worked and paid into the Social Security system died, the benefits were to be paid to the surviving spouse as a survivor benefit. Men were required to prove dependency on their spouses before they became eligible for Social Security benefits. There was no such requirement for women.

The Goldfarb decision eliminated the different treatment of men and women. The Court instead required Social Security to treat men and women equally by paying benefits to either spouse without regard to dependency.

Many of the men who would benefit from the Goldfarb decision were also receiving large government pensions. It was believed that these retirees would bankrupt the system, receiving large government and private pensions in addition to survivor benefits.

To combat this perceived problem, pension offset legislation was enacted in 1977. The legislation provided for a dollar-for-dollar reduction of Social Security benefits to spouses or retiring spouses who received earned benefits from a Federal, State or local retirement system. The pension offset provisions can affect any retiree who receives a civil service pension and Social Security, but primarily affects widows or widowers eligible for survivor benefits.

In 1983, the pension offset was reduced to two-thirds of the public employer survivor benefit. It was believed that one-third of the pension was equivalent to the pension available in the private sector.

The pension offset, aimed at high-paid government employees, also applies to public service employees who

generally receive lower pension benefits. These public service employees include secretaries, school cafeteria workers, teachers' aids, and others who receive low wages as government employees. The pension offset as applied to this group is punitive, unfairly harsh and bad policy.

Government pensions were tailored to reduce benefits that were equal to many combined private pension-Social Security policies in the private sector for upper level government workers. However, this was not true for lower income workers, such as employees who work as secretaries, school cafeteria workers, teachers' aids, and others who generally receive lower pension benefits.

To illustrate the harsh impact of the pension offset, consider a widow who retired from the Federal Government and receives a civil service annuity of \$550 monthly. The full widow's benefit is \$385. The current pension offset law reduces the widow's benefit to \$19 a month. Two-thirds of the \$550 civil service annuity is \$367, which is then subtracted from the \$385 widow's benefit, leaving only \$19. The retired worker receives \$569, \$550 plus \$19, per month.

Proponents of the pension offset claim that the offset is justified because survivor benefits were intended to be in lieu of pensions. However, were this logic followed across the board, then people with private pension benefits would be subject to the offset as well. But this is not the case.

While Social Security benefits of spouses or surviving spouses earning government pensions are reduced by \$2 for every \$3 earned, Social Security benefits of spouses and surviving spouses earning private pensions are not subject to the offset at all. If retirees on private pensions do not have Social Security benefits subject to offset, why should retirees who work in the public service system?

Mr. Speaker, the pension offset has created a problem that cries out for reform. It will cause tens of thousands of retired government employees, including many former paraprofessionals, custodians or lunch room workers, to live their retirement years at or near the poverty level.

My office has received numerous calls, all from widows who are just getting by and desperately need some relief from the pension offset. During the 105th Congress I introduced the Government Pension Offset Repeal bill, H.R. 273. Thanks to the grassroots support for it, it received 183 votes. Today we introduced this bill with 119 cosponsors already, and I look forward with my colleagues to gaining passage of this important reform legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. BOEHLERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BOEHLERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

U.S. MILITARY ACTION TAKING PLACE IN SERBIA IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, U.S. military forces are now bombing a foreign nation halfway around the world. This cannot be a proud moment for America. The reason given for doing so is that Serbian leaders have not done what we have told them to do.

Serbia has not invaded another country but is involved in a nasty civil war, with both sides contributing to the violence. There is no American security interest involved in Serbia. Serbia has not threatened us nor used any force against any American citizen.

□ 1945

As bad as the violence is toward the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, our ability to police and stop all ethnic fighting around the world is quite limited and the efforts are not permitted under constitutional law. We do not even pretend to solve the problems of sub-Saharan Africa, Tibet, East Timor, Kurdistan, and many other places around the world where endless tragic circumstances prevail.

Our responsibility as U.S. Members of Congress is to preserve liberty here at home and uphold the rule of law. Meddling in the internal and dangerous affairs of a nation involved in civil war is illegal and dangerous. Congress has not given the President authority to wage war.

The House resolution regarding Kosovo was narrowly, reluctantly, and conditionally passed. It was a non-binding resolution and had no effect of law. Even if it did, the resolution dealt with sending troops as a peacekeeping force to Kosovo only if a peace agreement was signed. There was no mention of endorsing an act of war against Serbia. Besides, the resolution was not the proper procedure for granting war powers to a president.

The Senate resolution, now claimed to be congressional consent for the President to wage war, is not much better. It, too, was a sense of Congress resolution without the force of law. It implies the President can defer to NATO for authority to pursue a war effort.

Only Congress can decide the issue of war. Congress cannot transfer the constitutional war power to the President or to NATO or to the United Nations. The Senate resolution, however, specifically limits the use of force to air operations and missile strikes, but no war has ever been won with air power alone. The Milosevic problem will actually get worse with our attacks, and ground troops will likely follow.

It has been argued we are needed to stop the spread of war throughout the Balkans. Our presence will do the opposite, but it will certainly help the military-industrial complex. Peaceful and

cooperative relations with Russia, a desired goal, has now ended; and we have provoked the Russians into now becoming a much more active ally of Serbia.

U.S. and NATO policy against Serbia will certainly encourage the Kurds. Every argument for Kosovo's independence can be used by the Kurds for their long-sought-after independence. This surely will drive the Turks away from NATO.

Our determination to be involved in the dangerous civil war may well prompt a stronger Greek alliance with their friends in Serbia, further splitting NATO and offending the Turks, who are naturally inclined to be sympathetic to the Albanian Muslims. No good can come of our involvement in this Serbian civil war, no matter how glowing and humanitarian the terms used by our leaders.

Sympathy and compassion for the suffering and voluntary support for the oppressed is commendable. The use of force and acts of war to pick and choose between two sides fighting for hundreds of years cannot achieve peace. It can only spread the misery and suffering, weaken our defenses and undermine our national sovereignty.

Only when those who champion our war effort in Serbia are willing to volunteer for the front lines and offer their own lives for the cause will they gain credibility. Promoters of war never personalize it. It is always some other person or some other parent's child's life who will be sacrificed, not their own.

With new talk of reinstituting the military draft since many disillusioned military personnel are disgusted with the morale of our armed forces, all Americans should pay close attention as our leaders foolishly and carelessly rush our troops into a no-win war of which we should have no part.

TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY IRENE HEIGHT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, in light of this being Women's History Month, the Congresswoman from California (Ms. LEE) will be on the floor later this evening on a special order on women of color.

Because of a prior commitment, I will not be here at that time. But I would like to use a few minutes to offer a few words concerning a great woman of color of this century, Dorothy Irene Height, President and CEO Emeritus of the National Council of Negro Women.

Dorothy Height has spent half a century of ground-breaking service to her country to African American women. She is one of the great civil rights and women's rights leaders of our time. And I emphasize both of those great missions in speaking about Dr. Height.